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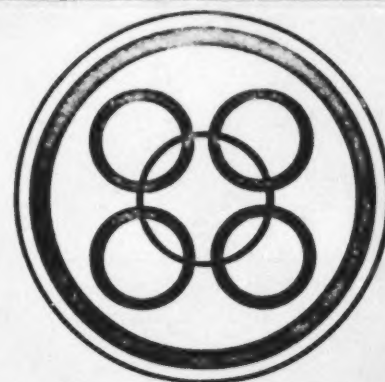
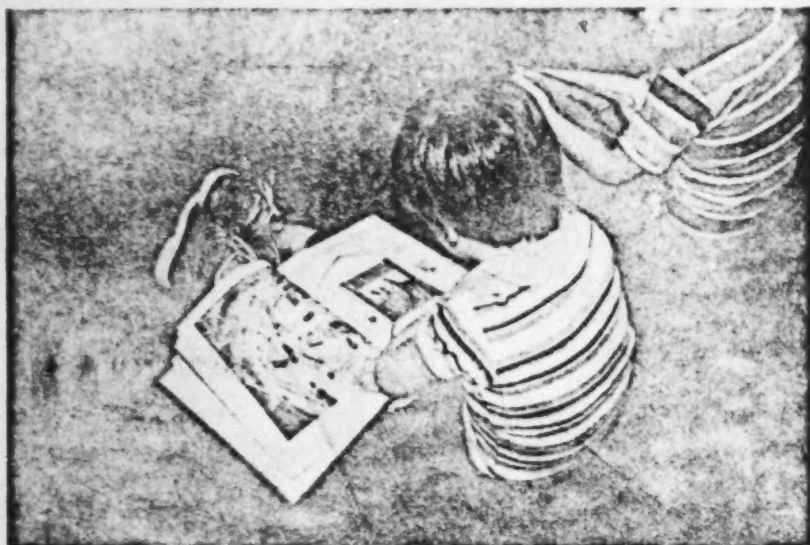
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ABSTRACT

The two terms reading problems and learning disabilities are not synonymous. Nevertheless, an increasing number of children who have reading problems are being labeled as learning disabled. Given the growing numbers of children failing to become competent readers, the fact that more and more of these children are being identified and treated as learning disabled and still are not learning to read, and the increasing level of frustration experienced by teachers around this issue, it is necessary to step back and match educational practices to an understanding of how children learn so that all children, learning disabled or not, have the best environment for learning to read. Such an environment can be facilitated by a comprehension-centered reading program, based on psycholinguistic principles, that helps children to learn to read by reading. Such a program embodies the following principles: (1) the classroom needs to be a warm and inviting place; (2) an abundant supply of reading materials needs to be readily and easily available to children; (3) children should be provided with many occasions to engage in meaningful discussions; (4) the children should also be encouraged to write; and (5) rather than giving emphasis to phonics and sight-words from basal readers, the emphasis should be given to more reading to and with children. (HOD)

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ANOTHER LOOK AT LEARNING DISABILITIES AND READING INSTRUCTION

BY SHERRY DIGBY

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Another Look at Learning Disabilities and Reading Instruction

By Sherry Digby
University of North Dakota

For the past twelve years I have been working directly with children, training teachers and consulting with teachers and administrators about reading programs. A major concern in education when I began teaching was the number of children experiencing difficulties learning to read. That concern has not abated over the years. In fact, it has grown to rather incredible proportions. Whenever I talk with teachers and administrators they express frustration and anxiety about teaching reading. The specific questions vary, but the underlying concern is the same. Some of the questions I frequently hear are:

"How can I motivate reluctant readers?"

"How can we get those test scores up?"

"Which basal series gets the best results?"

"I can't do anything with this kid. Do you think he's learning disabled?"

"They read but they don't understand. I don't understand. What can I do?"

Teachers do what they think they're supposed to do according to their reading series and administrators provide resource help, new reading series and, sometimes, rather advanced technological devices, yet an alarming number of children either do not read well or, perhaps worse, can read but choose not to. Conscientious educators can't help but wonder what's going wrong.

In the last few years I've observed a distressing phenomena--the attempt to find excuses for this growing problem by attributing it to sources external to educational practice. While there are a number of factors which contribute to reading problems, the most distressing and the least acceptable explanation to me is that there is something wrong with the child; that she/he is learning disabled. Unfortunately, this is an explanation that I am hearing from teachers more and more frequently. Also, unfortunately, teachers seldom view themselves as competent to teach a learning disabled child to read.

Given the growing numbers of children failing to become competent readers, the fact that more and more of these children are being identified and treated as learning disabled and still aren't learning to read,

and given the increasing level of frustration experienced by teachers around this issue, it seems necessary to step back and ask:

1. What is a learning disability? Is it really probable that 30%-50% of our children are learning disabled? What else could account for the reading difficulties being experienced by children?
2. What is the nature of the reading process? How do children learn to read?
3. How can we match our educational practices to our understanding of how children learn so that all children, learning disabled or not, have the best environment for learning to read?

These are questions I'd like to address in the remainder of this article. I think it's important, though, for the reader to remember that what we see, what we hear, what we attend to, what we make significant and what we learn are dictated for all of us by the models we create of the world based on our own experiences. This is true for everyone, children and adults. And, it's true for me as an educator and a writer. My perspective on the issues raised above is clearly influenced by my own experiences teaching, reading, conducting research and working with children with a wide variety of reading problems. Your perspectives are influenced by your experiences. My hope is that this article will provide some of you with new insights with which to approach a problem which concerns all educators.

What is a Learning Disability?

Most children identified in our schools as having learning disabilities have reading problems. The two terms, however, are not synonymous: the general term "learning disabilities" may also refer to children who experience difficulties with oral language, mathematics, listening, thinking, writing, spelling, social interactions and motor problems, but excludes children whose problems arise primarily from auditory, visual, mental, emotional and environmental problems. Reading problems, on the other hand, are reading problems regardless of their origins but not all children with reading problems evidence difficulties in motor functions, math, writing, oral language, spelling or social interactions.

As a unique field of education, learning disabilities is usually considered to have originated in 1963. At that time Samuel Kirk spoke with a group of parents whose children were experiencing severe learning difficulties but whose problems were not primarily due to mental retardation or emotional disturbance. He said, "Recently, I have used the term 'learning disabilities' to describe a group of children who have disorders in development of language, speech, reading, and associated communication skills" (Kirk, 1963). The parents evidently preferred this term to labels such as minimal brain damage, central nervous system dysfunction or perceptual handicaps and adopted it when the Association for

Children with Learning Disabilities was formed. It is important to remember that these children identified as being learning disabled formed a unique population exhibiting similar characteristics. According to Tarver and Hallahan (1976) the ten characteristics most frequently cited in the literature as being associated with learning disabled children are:

1. hyperactivity
2. perceptual-motor impairments
3. emotional lability
4. general coordination deficits
5. disorders of attention
6. impulsivity
7. disorders of memory and thinking
8. specific academic problems in reading, writing, spelling and/or arithmetic
9. disorders in language
10. neurological signs

Originally, a child with a specific learning disability was one who exhibited a cluster of difficulties. Learning disabilities constituted a syndrome of problems rather than an isolated difficulty such as a problem with reading.

In spite of the fact that a learning disability is, theoretically at least, a specific and unique cluster of learning problems which require, theoretically, specialized remediation, an increasing number of children who have reading problems are being labeled as learning disabled. Although the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children estimates that only between 1% and 3% of the school population have learning disabilities, states where referral rates are as high as 30% to 50% are not uncommon. The definition of learning disabilities provided by PL94-142 states that:

"Specific learning disabilities" means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing or motor handicaps, of mental retardation, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantages.

(Section 5 (b) (4) of P.L. 94-142)

There have been many attempts to clarify this definition. One widely accepted standard of interpretation was outlined by Kirk and Gallagher (1979). They listed three criteria implied by law that must be met before a child can be identified as learning disabled: (1) there must be a discrepancy between achievement and potential; (2) the child must need special attention; (3) the exclusion criterion must be met.

Unfortunately, listing criteria does not necessarily insure accurate evaluation. The discrepancy criterion is usually determined through a formula which uses a child's chronological age and IQ, the validity of which is highly questionable (Heward and Orlansky, 1980). However, to me, a problem more relevant to the specific area of reading arises from the interaction of the "need for special education" and "exclusion" clauses. I am concerned about these particular criteria because I think that it is through these that we abdicate our responsibilities to help children learn to read.

The first clause is often interpreted as meaning the child cannot benefit or has not benefitted from "regular" classroom instruction, that she/he needs something special and unique in order to learn. This criterion rests on a totally untenable assumption; that any child can learn from the overly regimented, artificially segmented, pre-packaged programs that pass for reading instruction in our schools. The amazing fact is not that increasing numbers of children are having difficulty learning to read, but that some children learn in spite of the system. One cannot assume that difficulty learning to read in our classrooms is indicative of a learning disability, yet this is an assumption frequently made. Instead of making this assumption, we should ask ourselves what there is in our reading programs that would inspire a child to read. In what ways do our programs model for children that these are valid purposes for this skill?

Secondly, children whose problems stem primarily from "environmental, cultural or economic disadvantages" theoretically are not identified as learning disabled. My experiences with children who have reading problems and are labeled learning disabled lead me to suspect that these disadvantages are being rather narrowly defined. My guess is that white, middle-class children are considered to be beyond cultural, economic and environmental influences because of the ways in which we perceive people of various socioeconomic levels. It's hard to think of children as being disadvantaged when they come from families who meet society's norms as "good families." Yet there is increasing documentation which suggests that excessive TV viewing (economic), classroom practices (cultural), increased environmental pollution and over-refined food affect children's abilities to learn. We seem to feel justified in saying, "This child can't read. She/He is of average intelligence, from an adequate home and a member of an advantaged class in our society. Her/His problems can't stem from environmental, cultural or economic influences. Therefore, she/he must be learning disabled." I would suggest that large numbers of children being defined as learning disabled are actually disabled readers but that their problems stem from classroom practices that do not support what we know about how children learn and from the escalation of environmental and cultural difficulties we're experiencing in our country.

So, what is a learning disability? In truth, there is no universal agreement. We know that there are children in our schools who have trouble reading. Some of them may have specific learning disabilities, some may be identified as learning disabled but may actually be experiencing difficulties because of cultural or environmental influences. Actually, I don't think it makes a whole lot of difference whether or not a

child is learning disabled when it comes to helping her/him learn to read. According to Reid and Hresko (1981, p. 51) "...it has not been demonstrated that learning disabled children or adults learn in a way that is fundamentally different from other persons. It is clear, instead, that their learning is less efficient and apparently developmentally delayed." An increasing body of literature suggests that what we've been lacking in our reading programs are not new books, updated word lists, new machines or external motivational devices, but rather a clear understanding of how the reading process occurs. Perhaps if we compare how reading has traditionally been defined in our schools and the instructional models suggested by these definitions to the more modern understanding of the reading process, we'll begin to find more useful ways in which to help children learn to read.

What is the Adult/Logical Explanation of Reading?

It is quite tempting to apply adult logic to the processes of language development and reading in order to determine how they can be most effectively taught. We are rather strongly influenced by our society to analyze tasks into parts and deal with the parts rather than the whole. The assembly-line is an excellent example of this societal orientation, as are the increasingly pervasive skills-oriented reading programs found in our schools. If we wanted to analyze reading from a strictly logical perspective it would make sense to propose the following argument:

Reading a book involves dealing with pages of printed material organized in paragraphs. These paragraphs are constructed from sentences, which are constructed from words, which are made up of syllables, which are made up of letters. There are particular sounds that speakers of English associate with particular letters. Clearly, words can't be "decoded" unless children know the sound-symbol relationships and how to blend the sounds into words. Once they have words, they can string them together into sentences, and the sentences into paragraphs. Therefore, children must be taught sound-symbol relationships and various word-attack skills so they can "decode" unknown words. They must also build a large stock of sight words to facilitate smooth "reading."

For many educators this additive model adequately describes the process of reading and learning to read. The underlying assumption is that knowledge is a concrete, tangible reality that can be broken into its component parts, hierarchically sequenced, taught in pieces and then, we can only assume, magically integrated by the child.

What About "Underlying Abilities"?

Other educators hypothesize fundamental "underlying abilities" upon which reading skills rest. These underlying abilities are sometimes called "basic psychological processes" and include abilities such as

visual discrimination and auditory memory. Proponents of this model might make the following argument:

Well, it's true that to read you need to deal with letters, words, sentences, paragraphs and meaning. But the human nervous system is a complex mechanism. Complex abilities such as reading are built upon the basic psychological processes. If a person is to be able to read, basic abilities of memory, perception and attention need to be developed and refined first before more complex functions ("reading") can be attained.

This model is sometimes called the building blocks model. Reading is seen as a process which involves laying a foundation of "blocks" (visual memory, attention, auditory discrimination, etc.) and then building a structure layer by layer until "reading" is achieved. This process could be compared to the way a child builds a pyramid out of toy blocks.

Why Aren't These Models Satisfactory?

Unfortunately, learning to read is not comparable to an assembly line. Unlike a car which can be made up from its parts, reading involves much more than being able to say printed words. The whole of reading is an interaction of many processes rather than the sum of what are called "reading skills." The skills model of reading suggested by adult logic almost totally ignores the role played in reading by the reader's background which includes knowledge about the purposes and ways of speaking, reading and writing, what a book is, knowledge of word-meanings, concepts, relationships, familiarity with the way our language works and any number of pertinent life experiences. Whether the reader is conscious of these factors or not is unimportant. Reading will not occur unless the child assumes an active role in interpreting the author's message by applying the information mentioned above.

Neither can learning to read be compared to building a pyramid. Reading involves an ongoing interaction of cognitive, physiological and affective processes rather than a linear sequential development of discrete abilities. Although we can label and describe a variety of processes which we think contribute to the ability to read, in reality they cannot be usefully separated from one another or remediated as isolated processes (Arter and Jenkins, 1977). The underlying abilities model does, at least, take into account the complexity of the human organism. Unfortunately, the actual instructional approaches based on this model tend to ignore this complexity when attempts are made to teach a child to visually discriminate letters or to improve her/his auditory memory. These processes are undoubtedly important but, again, this model does not take into account the stored knowledge of the reader or the nature of the interaction of the reader's mind with the writer's thoughts.

How Can the Reading Process Be Explained?

As stated before, the totality of reading is much more than the

ability to decode printed words to sound or to perform on tests of visual and auditory memory and discrimination. Reading is constructing meaning. It's an interaction between the language and thoughts of the writer and those of the reader. Effective reading requires that the reader actively seek to interpret the author's message by using whatever background information she/he has to make sense of what is being read. Ability to use sound-symbol cues is important to the reading process but it is neither the only cueing system nor the most important one that readers utilize. Nevertheless, this is the cueing system that is most frequently emphasized in primary reading programs and in reading programs for learning disabled children. The assumption is that children don't know sound-symbol relationships, that knowledge of this cueing system is prerequisite to reading and, therefore, should be taught before anything else. In fact, what readers need to be able to do is effectively use their knowledge of the meaning contained in our language, sentence patterns and sound-symbol relationships to make sense of the message encoded in print. Because of the abundance of print in our society, e.g., games, food labels, street signs, store signs, printovers on TV ads, labels, etc., most children come to school with at least an awareness of the role of print in reading. Many already know several of the sound-symbol associations. Children also come to school having acquired most of the syntactic structures of English. Most importantly, perhaps, they come with language. Teachers may not hear the wealth of stories and experiences in the classrooms but one need only eavesdrop in the playground to discover the marvelous facility and creativity with which children use language.

So what constitutes teaching reading? Many outstanding educators (Goodman, 1980; Harste, 1980; Smith, 1978) concur that reading, like spoken language, is learned rather than taught. Stop and think for a moment. How do children learn to talk? Do we insist they learn individual speech sounds before we allow them to say words? Do we, when they are first learning, stop them when words are mispronounced? Do we give skills' drills and tests to make sure that they've "mastered" each of the components of the complex process called talking? Of course not! We talk with babies, we respond enthusiastically to their efforts, we answer their questions, provide feedback through our reactions to the questions they ask about language, we extend their understanding by elaborating on their statements. In short, we provide a model that communicates that spoken language is a meaningful, useful and desirable ability. And we provide a positive, supportive environment within which children explore, try-on and test their ability to orally communicate. They learn to talk because they see a need and a means for communicating. Talking serves a purpose.

How Should Reading Be Taught?--A Psycholinguistic Model

There are implications in the above for the teaching of reading. If we consider the complexity of the reading process and the relationship of the reader to the print, strategies and approaches much different from a decoding or underlying abilities model are suggested. From a psycholinguistic perspective a successful reading program would support the following conclusions:

What we need to do is provide a supportive environment rich in opportunities for children to hear, explore and try our spoken and written language. We need to reinforce children's efforts. We need to demonstrate to children through our actions that reading is possible, meaningful and useful. We need to convey to them that reading is more than saying words, that there are many strategies we can employ to interpret printed information. Most importantly, we need to let children read because it is only through reading a variety of printed material that children discover the purposes and uses of this ability, and how to effectively apply their wealth of background information to the author's message in order to gain meaning.

At this point you may be asking yourself what is the reality of a psycholinguistically based program. I would like to share with you both a general way to approach reading sessions and a partial unit that allows children to read, encourages them to think, develops their ability to actively make sense of print and models for them real and useful purposes for reading. The strategies suggested are applicable to all children because all children are readers at some level. Our task is to start where they are, help them realize that they can read and provide them with opportunities to use their reading abilities in meaningful situations in order to continue to grow cognitively and emotionally. Please remember that these are general suggestions. You know your children best. You know their interests. The most important thing to achieve is an environment in which children can read, explore and discuss their perceptions with you and their friends.

What Are Some Approaches to Comprehension-Centered Reading?

The following list comes, interestingly enough, from a textbook on learning disabilities. These are the characteristics the authors consider essential to an educational program for learning disabled children. Actually, they are essential for any reading program and are an excellent summary, I think, of the attributes of a comprehension-centered program based on psycholinguistic principles.

1. "Effective instruction provides activities (in the broadest sense) to facilitate the learner's ability to construct meaning from experience."
2. "...it is vital for the learner to understand that he or she be active in his or her own learning."
3. "Its goal is focused more clearly on maintenance of information in long-term rather than short-term memory."
4. "Learning is a process of elaborating what the child already knows, not a process of accumulating bits of information or skills."

(Reid and Hresko, 1981, pp. 49-50)

The suggestions given below for comprehensive-centered reading embody all of these principles.

1. The classroom needs to be a warm and inviting place. Certainly at the primary level, and preferably in all grades, places should be available where children can read books of their choice, experiment with art media, write stories and poems, invent, observe things, talk with each other, listen to stories, sit and think, act out songs and stories, play games related to math, reading, spelling, etc. The overriding message must be that reading and writing are closely interwoven with our daily activities; that they are meaningful, purposeful activities.
2. An abundant supply of reading materials needs to be readily and easily available to children. In order to learn how to read material from different types of print settings, the children must have the opportunity to interact with, explore, discuss and compare various styles, genre, levels of complexity and purposes. This means that, in addition to a variety of types of books, newspapers, magazines, comics, game directions, word-lists, group stories, child-authored stories and environmental print need to be in the classroom. It is essential that children learn through good models that reading serves a variety of purposes.
3. Children should be provided with many occasions to engage in meaningful discussions. Their experiences need to be talked about and extended. Facility with spoken language is the result of opportunities to talk and listen to others talk; to test one's own ideas and perceptions against those of others. Cognitive development doesn't occur as well or as rapidly as it could in classes where children primarily answer recall questions and spend a lot of time on drills and worksheets. They simply must have numerous opportunities to TALK!
4. The children should also be encouraged to write. They have many stories to tell, experiences to report, observations to record. Composing and reading their own stories actually facilitates children's abilities to read the works of other people.
5. Rather than so strongly emphasizing phonics and sight-words from basal readers I would suggest that much more be done in terms of reading to and with children. I would also suggest Sylvia Ashton-Warner's key word approach be adopted for working with sight words and that student-written or dictated stories comprise a large portion of early reading materials. This does not mean abandoning the basal series. It simply means not relying on it to such an extent.

A last instructional suggestion involves teaching children prediction and confirmation strategies that will enable them to become increasingly independent in their reading. These

strategies focus on reading for meaning rather than on word-perfect recitations. Please refer to Yetta Goodman's book, Reading Strategies: Focus on Comprehension, for more information.

In an attempt to help our undergraduate preservice teachers develop an understanding of how to facilitate a comprehension-centered reading program, the language arts instructors at the University of North Dakota began a program called "Shared Reading." We wanted our students to learn the importance of attending to children's interests and needs. We wanted them to learn that children actually learn to read by reading. This has been a very successful program both for our students and the children with whom they worked. The following guide used by students was written by Barbara Schelar, one of the instructors. The principles and strategies listed here are applicable to any class or reading program.

* * * * *

SHARED READING EXPERIENCE

Overall Objectives

Find out about books the child likes and the kinds of background information and expectations she/he brings to different types of reading materials. You can do this by reading aloud from a variety of materials you have selected and by allowing the students to select materials from the library she/he would like to hear.

Observe the student "learning to read by reading" as you listen to her/him read to you over the semester. Again bring in materials which may broaden the student's awareness of exciting things to read and observe how the child self-selects materials. As you listen, notice the kinds of miscues* the child is making. Try to gain insight into why the child might have read that.

Shared Reading is not intended to be a time to teach skills.

Strategies for Reluctant Readers and/or Building Fluency

Begin with very easy-to-read books. A useful rule is that if a child gets stuck three or more times per page, it is too hard for fluent reading.

* Reading anything other than what is on the printed page. Remember the child is a theory maker. Errors give us clues to the theories--which underly how children think.

Offer to alternate paragraphs or pages. This not only gives the child a break, it also keeps the story sense flowing smoothly and will thus help the child read more fluently. It's best if you start first.

Read aloud along with the child gradually fading your voice down if and when the child becomes more confident and fluent.

Read the story aloud to the child before she/he reads it to you or read it together silently first.

Let the child skim the page and ask about unknown words before she/he reads it.

Re-read things you have read together before.

Write a story, description, set of directions, etc. and have the child read that.

Strategies for Building Comprehension

Encourage children to make predictions about what a book might be about, what might happen next, what the next word might be... Praise good thinking, not right answers.

Model and provide practice in reading for meaning. One way to do this is to alternate pages or sections of reading. You read a page, tell about what you read and ask the child a question about what you read. Then the child reads a page, tells about what she/he read and asks you a question about it...

Discuss interesting words and ideas with children.

Have the child retell the story. Note the kinds of things she/he remembered and how she/he integrated them. This will give you insight into things you might want to discuss.

Ask some questions that lead the child to relate what was read to her/his own experience. Does this ending make sense to you? Why or why not? Would you rather _____ or _____?

Strategies for Dealing with Unknown Words and Miscues

If the child comes to a word and pauses for more than a second or two, just tell her/him the word.

If a child substitutes, omits or adds a word or words that sound right and do not change the meaning, ignore it.

If the child reads something that does not make sense, point it out. You might...

Ask: Does that make sense to you?

Say: That word is _____ or that says _____
(read the sentence).

Occasionally you might cover the word or phrase with your finger and ask the child, "What would make sense here?" At first, accept anything that makes sense. When the child is proficient at doing this, begin encouraging her/him to check predictions. Expose the word on the page and ask, "Does that look like the word you expected?" Actually, just exposing the first letter or two is usually sufficient and most efficient.

* * * * *

A UNIT

This unit starts with concrete experiences, models the reading and writing processes through charting group stories and reading to children, moves the kids into related published books and helps them develop strategies for making what they read make sense. This isn't intended to be a lesson plan. It's more like a general game plan. Notice the numerous opportunities for children to read, write, explore their environment and new ideas, discuss their understandings and insights and to use their existing knowledge to interpret new information.

Knowing My Body

Activity

Day One

1. Ask children what they use to learn about the world. As the discussion progresses, help them to discover that we use our five senses. Ask for examples of what our eyes, ears, noses, skin, tongues tell us. Put up a chart.
2. Show Toes-Tell and/or read part of The Sensible Book. Discuss.
3. Do a blindfold, barefoot walk through a maze of trays containing mud, spaghetti, sand, cotton, etc. Brainstorm for and chart descriptive words.

Day Two

1. Make a footprint mural--decorate and write group stories about the adventures of the mystery feet. Share stories.
2. Do a book-sharing session of fictional and informational books related to the senses. Invite the children to select a book, "read", and come back to share.

Activity

Day Two
(continued)

Obviously lots of learning can occur here as different ideas are discussed.

Day Three

1. Review one or two of the group stories. Selected words that are easily predicted from context should be covered over. Encourage the kids to guess the missing words. Accept any reasonable answer. Confirm with following context.
2. Give children a worksheet on which are typed one or two of the other group stories with a few predictable words deleted. Have the kids individually predict from context and write in missing words. (Encourage invented spelling.)
3. Share these "new" stories. Discuss how they're the same and different.
4. You read another "sense" related book.

Day Four

1. Read "Squishy Touch" from Silverstein's A Light in the Attic. Encourage the children to make the appropriate noises. Talk about other things you touch and the noises they make.
2. On a chart (already prepared) write a class poem using this as a frame.
*"Everything King Midas touched turned to gold, the
 'Every single' thing I touch turns to _____,
 'Today I touched the _____, _____ (sound)
 etc."*
3. Read finished poem. Have children illustrate their favorite parts and write either the class line or their own. Make into a book.
4. Talk with the kids about what sense they'd like to explore next. Decide as a group.

Day Five

1. (Let's pretend they selected hearing)
 Ask the kids to close their eyes and listen. Then get them to tell you all the sounds they heard. Talk to them about what sounds tell people.

Then go for a listening walk around the school. Take a tape recorder and make brief recordings at

ActivityDay Five
(continued)

the office, the cafeteria, the library, another classroom, the gym, etc. When you get to the classroom have the kids recreate the order of your walk (sequencing). List on the board, play the tape for each stop and list the sounds they heard. After each sound ask, "What made the sound?" "Does the sound help you know where you are and what's going on?" Invite kids to draw a map of the walk and write in appropriate descriptive words.

2. Read them an appropriate book about how the ears work. Discuss. Use a three-dimensional model of the ear to facilitate discussion.

Day Six

1. Play a tape of prepared outdoor sounds. Have the kids guess where the sounds happened and what they communicate.
2. Present this chart, discuss and fill in.

Every Day Sounds			
<u>Home</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Bus</u>	<u>Playground</u>

Help them stretch their memories and vocabularies!

Day Seven

1. Messages Without Words--Ask children to collect examples of messages they receive without sounds or words. Example: Mother sets the plates on the table, time to put toys away, get ready to eat; teacher sits down on chair near rug, time to gather round; friend beckons from across the street, wants you to come over. Record in words or pictures. Sort into categories. Make chart.
2. Nonverbal Communication--Read and discuss several of the following books or others which expand on ways we communicate without words.

Carle, Eric, I See a Song, Thomas W. Crowell, 1973, unpagged.

ActivityDay Seven
(continued)

Ets, Marie Hall, Talking Without Words, Viking Press, 1968, paperback, unpagged.

MacDonald First Library, Signals and Messages, MacDonald and Co., 1975, 31 pp.

Stewig, John, Sending Messages, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978, 64 pp.

After "reading" I See A Song, write a group story and chart.

Day Eight

1. Use group story chart with predictable words covered. Go through prediction exercise but this time show kids how they can confirm predictions by looking at initial consonants.

Example:

The man played a (song) .
He saw the moon and the (sun) .

If the kids predicted song, violin, dance, you would then unmask the "s" and ask which of the three words they think starts with the "s" sound. Do the same with the next word.

2. Talk about the "s" sound and other words that have that sound. Make collages or posters related to this sound.
3. Make books of selected sounds with pictures and words.

Day Nine

1. Activity: "Without Words" Bulletin Board

Materials: Children's drawings
Magazines
Newspapers

Using their own illustrations as well as magazine and newspaper pictures, children construct a bulletin board of messages given without words. These could be classified by location.

2. Activity: What's It Like Not to Hear?

Materials: Story film
Informational film
Film projector and screen

Activity

Day Nine
(continued)

- a. Silent film. Choose 2 films from school collection, one that tells a story and an informational one.
- b. Instruct the children to watch the film to see how much they can find out about the story when the sound is turned off.
- c. Children reconstruct the story using only the information available from the film pictures. Draw attention to kinds of non-verbal communication used in the film, how they knew what was happening, etc., note also what they could not tell without the accompanying sound. (With older children, seeing one of the old silent movies would be a thought-provoking follow-up. How did the movie makers compensate for lack of sound?)
- d. Repeat process with an informational film. Where are the gaps in the information? Are there more gaps in the story or the informational film? Why?
- e. Play either (or both) films and note differences in interpretation when sound is added. Discuss what life might be like if you could not hear; what you would miss; what effect that would have on you.

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Introducing the Author



Sherry Digby received her Ph.D. at the University of Colorado and did her master's and undergraduate work at Auburn University. She is now a member of the faculty in elementary and special education at the Center for Teaching and Learning. In addition, she tutors children in reading and serves as a consultant to schools in developing comprehension based reading programs. Her teaching experience includes preschool handicapped, elementary and junior high school. Her hobbies include roller-skating, running and reading science fiction.

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